

**APPLICATION
FOR UNITED STATES PATENT**

Inventor(s): Michael Tate Wood
2223 Angel Crest Circle
Cordova, TN 38016
U.S. Citizen

Bobby Lee Windham
6790 Oak Forest Drive
Olive Branch, MS 38654

Invention: HUNTER'S COAT

LAW OFFICES OF ROYAL W. CRAIG
10 N. Calvert Street
Suite 153
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Telephone: (410) 385-2383

HUNTER'S COAT

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present application derives priority from U.S. Provisional Patent Application

10 60/452,795 for "WATERFOWL HUNTER'S COAT", filed March 13, 2003.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the invention

The present invention relates generally to clothing for hunters, and more particularly, to a
15 durable, waterproof and practical hunter's coat having an array of specialized features and
compartments to provide special utility for hunters, and especially waterfowl, as well as turkey
and other game birds, deer, and game in general.

2. Description of the Background

20 Hunters typically wear special-purpose camouflaged clothing so that they blend in with
their surroundings, thus being obscured from the vision of their prey. The prior art is replete
with such clothing, including jump-suits, vests, jackets, and the like, all particularly designed for
hunting.

Many prior art citations are drawn to specialized features. For example, U.S. Patent No.
25 4,882,786 to Gross shows a hunting jacket that incorporates an arm support for carrying a gun.
The jacket includes various pockets and a gun pad on the front, and a sling-type forearm support
on the inside of the jacket.

5 U.S. Patent No. 6,182,291 to Garvey shows a hunting vest with reversible flaps on the front and the back. Each flap is detachable with a camouflage color on one side and hunter's orange on the other side so that the hunter can display each side interchangeably. The front flap folds over pockets for protection of the contents.

U.S. Patent No. 3,337,101 to Tombari shows a hunting vest with outside pockets for
10 storage of shells, cartridges and the like.

U.S. Patent No. 5,718,000 to Ost et al. shows a multi-compartment, modular jacket including a vest with a vest front panel, a vest rear panel, a pair of armholes and a fastener for opening the vest. A plurality of pockets cover the outer surface of the vest. The vest has detachable sleeves, an inner and outer jacket and a plurality of pockets.

15 None of these prior art hunting garments are designed particularly for hunting waterfowl (ducks, geese and the like), which presents a most difficult environment. This type of hunting often takes place in standing water up to 50" deep, and it carries with it a specialized set of needs. For instance, waterfowl hunters typically have one arm free (the other supporting a rifle) and yet must store and have easy access to many hunting implements including multiple duck
20 calls, dog whistles, ammunition, etc. To illustrate one common scenario, suppose a hunter has just waded out on the marsh to retrieve a bird, and with bird in hand he now needs to whistle for his dog. The hunter must stow the bird, zipper open a pocket and retrieve a whistle, all whilst carrying his shotgun for duck and geese hunting. The same issues arise in the context of many other forms of hunting , including big game hunting when carrying a rifle. Existing waterfowl
25 coats typically offer no assistance for stowing the bird, and pocket closures are either non-

5 existent, exceedingly cumbersome to use one-handed (and when wet are impossible), or are totally submerged while standing in waist-deep water.

None of the known prior art offers a hunting jacket with a set of specifically designed receptacles for storing duck calls, shells, game birds and other related items, and with convenient single-hand access to such items even when wading in water waist-deep or higher.

10 It would be greatly advantageous to provide a warm, waterproof, practical, durable, and rugged hunter's coat specifically designed to be worn while hunting, and particularly when hunting waterfowl, with a plurality of features and storage compartments, each compartment being specifically designed for waterfowl-hunting with all of its above-described tribulations. The design of each compartment must include special placement on the jacket to allow use in
15 waist-deep or higher water, as well as special closures to provide quick and easy access. Moreover, the compartments should be specially configured for secure storage of hunting items, including duck calls, shells, slain water fowl, etc. when these items are not needed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

20 It is, therefore, an object of the present invention to provide a warm and waterproof hunter's coat to be worn while hunting, and especially when hunting waterfowl, preferably in a camouflage color to blend in with the surrounding environment.

It is another object to provide a hunter's coat suitable for wading, and with a variety of
25 customized storage compartments designed for secure storage while wading, yet with easy access when the stored items are needed.

5 It is another object to provide a hunter's coat that holds slain birds for transporting out of the marshes, which frees the hunter's hand for other purposes.

It is yet another object to provide a hunter's coat with dedicated outer shell pouches having hinges rather than zippers, thereby allowing them to remain in the open position, yet close securely, as needed.

10 It is still another object to provide a hunter's coat with a pocket for storing duck calls that are secured in place when not in use, but readily accessible when needed.

It is another object to provide a hunter's coat with a duck call separator that maintains the primary and back-up calls separate and apart and easily accessible during the hunt.

15 It is yet another object to provide a hunter's coat that allows the hunter to warm his hands while standing in water and wearing waders.

According to the present invention, the above-described and other objects are accomplished by providing a hunting coat specifically designed to be worn by hunters of waterfowl. The coat may be insulated for warmth and includes a quiet waterproof shell material in a camouflage color design so that the coat blends in with the surrounding environment. A 20 variety of customized storage compartments provide the hunter with easy access to specific gear when needed, yet maintain the gear in a secure position when not in use. A game bag/pocket attached to the back of the jacket stores slain waterfowl while the hunter is returning from the marshes, thereby keeping the hunter's hands free to carry other gear. Two hand-warmer pockets are sewn high in the jacket at breastbone height to allow the hunter to warm his hands while 25 wading in cold waist-deep or higher water, and particularly when the hunter wears chest-high waders over his coat and has no access to typical pockets. A dedicated shell pouch, located on

5 the face of the cargo pocket, has a removable hinge incorporated into its mouth so that it can remain in the open position for ready access to the shells when needed, but snaps shut for secure storage when not needed. A vertical duck call pouch/pocket located on the front center of the jacket has a magnet closure that allows the hunter to quickly stow and retrieve the duck call as needed, yet secures the calls in place to prevent damage or loss of the calls. The pouch also
10 serves to protect the call and call reeds from call freeze. A duck call's reed can accumulate saliva. As a result, the cold and wind exposure causes the saliva to freeze on the reed preventing blowing the call. This pouch helps reduce the exposure to the cold reducing call/reed freeze. when the hunter is in motion. A duck call separator attached to the coat above the call pocket maintains the primary and back-up calls separate and apart during the hunt. Other pockets are
15 designed to hold personal and emergency items. For example, a zippered security pocket may be provided directly across from the magnetic duck call pouch/pocket for holding items such as a license, keys, a wireless telephone, and gloves.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

20 Other objects, features, and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description of the preferred embodiment and certain modifications thereof when taken together with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a front view of the waterfowl hunter's coat according to the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a rear view of the waterfowl hunter's coat.

25 FIG. 3 is a close-up view of the zippered pouch 50 as in FIG. 1, which is readily accessible from the outside of the coat.

5 FIG. 4 is a close-up view of the call separator 90 as in FIG. 1.

FIG. 5 is a close-up view of the game call pocket 80 as in FIG. 1, which is a pocket with lateral ingress closed by a hemmed flap with a magnetic snap closure 82.

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of the hand-warmer pockets as in FIG. 1 in use with waders.

FIG. 7 is a composite view of an exemplary shell pouch 30 as in FIG. 1 (shown full at A, 10 empty and open at B, and partially disassembled at C).

FIG. 8 is an exploded perspective view of the spring-biased hinge opener 72 as used in FIG. 7.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

15 The hunter's coat of the present invention includes an array of features and storage compartments, each compartment being specifically designed for hunting, and especially for hunting waterfowl or other game. The features include special placement on the jacket, specialized closures to provide quick and easy access, and a unique configuration for secure storage of hunting items, including waterfowl duck calls, shells, slain water fowl, etc.

20 FIG. 1 is a front view of the hunter's coat 10 according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention. The body of the hunter's coat 10 is cut and sewn together from a pattern comprising discrete front and back panels, underarm gussets 74, arms 60, and collar, open at the front and closable (preferably by a full zipper). The pattern itself is a conventional parka pattern, slightly elongated so that the bottom of the coat is approximately at waist height, thereby 25 generally preventing the bottom of the coat from contacting water when the hunter is wading and wearing his coat outside his waders. For non-wading hunting, the coat 10 may be longer than

5 parka-length, as desired. Hunter's may also use the coat 10 while hunting in boats, or permanent blinds where wading is not involved, and yet conditions are otherwise those of wetland areas. Preferably, the body of the waterfowl hunter's coat 10 is formed in a two-ply configuration with an outer shell and inner lining. The outer shell is made from 100% waterproof and breathable material, such as micro-fleece (a specially selected and commercially-available non-pilling

10 fleece fabric designed to eliminate weight and bulk). Material such as micro-fleece is preferred because it is a high-density and hence quiet fabric, i.e., it does not rustle or make any other noise when the hunter moves, thus eliminating the risk of the ducks or geese hearing the movements of the hunter. Other conventional materials such as Nylon TM may also be used. All outer seams are taped to ensure complete waterproofing even in the strongest downpour.

15 It is also critical for hunters to keep warm, such as waterfowl hunters while out in the cold wet marshes, and for this purpose the water-proof outer shell may optionally be lined with insulation of various weights. The insulation may be in the form of a sewn-in or zip-in/out reversible liner. Polyester is a good liner material because it is hydrophobic, meaning that it repels water. This ensures that the insulation will not be affected by exposure to moisture and

20 will not decay. Alternatively, fleece, cotton, or other soft and warm liner may be used.

Despite the need for warmth, it is essential to have freedom of movement in the arms and shoulders, to allow the hunter to quickly mount his gun and aim at a fast flying bird. To accommodate this need, the coat's underarm gussets 75 are specially tailored for unrestricted range of motion of the arms and shoulders and maximum comfort. The generous underarm

25 gussets 75 are oversized to allow full overhead extension of both arms.

5 The arms or sleeves of the waterfowl coat 10 continue to cuffs 64 which are also specially-designed to be elastic. The elastic cuffs 64 comprise an elastic collar sewn inside a stretchable fabric shell, the cuffs 64 then being sewn to the terminus of the arms of jacket 10. Each cuff 64 is preferably made of a synthetic elastomer, such as Neoprene™, with stretchable fabric cover. The cuffs 64 fit snugly around the hunter's wrist, and the Neoprene™ collar 10 prevents dripping water from decoys from getting inside the coat sleeve, while it retains the warmth and dryness on the inside of the sleeve. The sleeves of the waterfowl coat 10 are encircled at their distal ends by an annular strap 62 with an adhesive gripping closure, such as Velcro® to loosen or tighten the strap 62 around the cuffs 64 to the hunter's desired tightness.

FIG. 2 is a back view of the waterfowl hunter's coat 10 as in FIG. 1. In addition to the 15 oversized gussets 75, the coat 10 is formed with two bellowed pleats 77 each on opposite sides of the back of the coat close to the shoulder blade area, running vertically up the rear which, in combination with the underarm gussets 75, allow for full overhead extension of both arms without restrictions or binding to prevent the jacket from being pulled up when shouldering a shotgun on overhead shots.

20 Referring back to FIG. 1, an exemplary layout of customized pockets and storage compartments will now be described. Two fleece-lined hand-warmer pockets 20 are located on opposing sides of the front zipper. The hand-warmer pockets 20 open through the outer shell at the breast into fleece-lined hand enclosures, and the opening of hand-warmer pockets 20 are angled within a range of from 15-20 degrees upward for upward insertion of the hunter's hands, 25 and for comfortably warming his hands in a cross-chest posture while wading in cold waist-deep or higher water. The angle is important because it facilitates the hunter's quick insertion and

5 removal of his hands when necessary. As described more fully below with reference to FIG. 6, these hand-warmer pockets 20 are particularly useful for those hunters that wear chest-high waders over their coats.

In addition to the hand-warmer pockets 20, there are multiple outer storage pockets uniquely designed for easy access to hunting gear, when needed.

10 Referring back to FIG. 1, opposing shell pouches 30 are located on the outside of the jacket 10 where indicated. To optimally serve their purpose as easy-access munitions stores, shell pouches 30 are equipped with spring-biased hinge openers that spring open to hold the mouths of the pockets 30 in an open position until pushed shut to prevent spills. The shell pouches 30 are roomy pleated pockets sewn to the outer shell of jacket 10 to provide ample 15 storage capacity, and the spring-biased hinge openers are further described below.

In addition, a lateral game-call pocket 80 is located on the outside of the jacket 10 where indicated at the breast, directly adjacent to the zipper, for holding duck and other game calls. The game call pocket 80 opens laterally through the outer shell to an inner enclosure that runs horizontally away from the zipper. The game call pocket 80 is a quick and easy storage area for 20 game calls, and it houses and protects the hunter's calls to prevent clanging together and the possible loss of their reed stoppers. The game call pocket 80 also serves to protect the calls and call reeds from call freeze. A duck call's reed can accumulate saliva. As a result, the cold and wind exposure causes the saliva to freeze on the reed preventing blowing the call. This call pocket 80 helps reduce the exposure to the cold reducing call/reed freeze.

25 FIG. 5 is a close-up view of the game call pocket 80 which is a sleeved pocket formed for lateral ingress and closed by a hemmed flap with a magnetic snap closure 82. The opening of

5 duck call pocket 80 can be releasably sealed by magnetic closure 82, which couples together for central closure in the hemmed flap. The magnetic closure 82 comprises a set of opposing permanent magnet snaps that interlock solely by magnetic force, thereby allowing duck calls to be stored therein for ready access by the hunter with his free hand. One of the snaps of magnetic closure 82 is sewn to the underside of the hemmed flap, and the other is sewn directly facing to 10 the shell of coat 10. The greatest advantage of the magnetic closure 82 is its ability to minimize the sound of putting your call up. By having a magnet instead of a zipper or Velcro™, the user can silently stow the calls and control the closure 82 for complete silence. Moreover, many game calls make unwanted noises when jostled about, but confining them to a call stow-way call pocket 82 near the chest area allows storage without making a noise. In addition, the magnetic 15 closure 82 minimizes the amount of dexterity needed to store or remove calls, and the upward placement of the duck call pocket 80 keeps the calls dry and safe. Again, this feature is helpful while wearing waders over the coat 10 because it keeps the calls high on the chest and easily accessible.

Referring back to FIG. 1, located above the call pocket 80 and attached to the face of the 20 coat is a call separator 90 for holding one game call and for maintaining it in a ready-to-use position. It is not uncommon for the ducks to fly in view for a while and then disappear for a while. As a result, the waterfowl hunter does not always have his call ready in his hand. When the ducks or geese suddenly appear, the hunter must quickly grab his call and oftentimes he inadvertently grabs the wrong call or looks away from the birds to select the correct call and may 25 miss an opportunity to shoot. The call separator 90 eliminates these opportunities for error by

5 providing a secure specific location for a particular one of the hunter's favorite calls. This allows the hunter to grab the correct call when needed without looking to find the location.

FIG. 4 is a close-up view of the call separator 90. The call separator 90 further comprises an elastic band sewn inside an expanding sleeve. The sleeve is sewn to the outer shell of jacket 10 at both ends to form an expandable collars for supporting one duck call. The hunter places 10 his primary call in the separator 90 during the hunt so that it remains secure and separated, and back-up calls go into game call pocket 80. When finished, the primary call is returned to the game call pocket 80 for more secure storage and transport.

Referring back to FIG. 1, a zippered pouch 50 is positioned high on the coat at breast level on the opposing side of the zipper from the call separator 90 and game call pocket 80. The 15 zippered pouch 50 opens through the outer shell to an inner enclosure that runs horizontally away from the zipper.

FIG. 3 is a close-up view of the zippered pouch 50, which is readily accessible from the outside of the coat, is for storing the hunter's license, keys, wallet, wireless phone, or the like, during the hunt. The location and the zipper of pouch 50 keep the hunter's personal items high, 20 dry and secure and more easily accessible while wearing waders, etc.

In addition to equipment storage, a hunter often needs to store his game. For example, when a hunter has just waded out on the marsh to retrieve a bird and now needs to whistle for his dog, he must stow the bird to free his hand. The hunting jacket 10 according to the present invention optionally includes a rearwardly disposed storage pouch 120 (see FIG. 2) for 25 temporary storage of game such as waterfowl. Storage pouch 120 is an oversize bellowed pouch sewn along the top and bottom to the rear of the outer shell of jacket 100 and left open on both

5 sides (with optional zipper closures) making it easily accessible simply by reaching back rearwardly and stuffing game therein. Storage pouch 120 extends across the entire lower back, from hip to hip and from waist to lower back, and this wide expanse allows a hunter to gather and temporarily stow up to six waterfowl whilst returning to his blind, without needing to carry a game bag. Stowage can be accomplished with one hand, leaving the other free to carry the
10 shotgun or other gear. The game storage pouch 120 is located on the back of the jacket so that the waterfowl do not impede the movement of the hunter. The game storage pouch 120 is also useful when chasing a downed bird that is on the move.

Certain of the foregoing features of the hunter's jacket 10 will now be described in greater detail.

15 FIG. 6 is a perspective view illustrating the use of the hand-warmer pockets 20 as in FIG. 1 in conjunction with chest waders. A hunter must often stand for hours in the cold (sometimes icy waist-deep or higher water) waiting for the opportunity to shoot his prey. Often in deep water a hunter wears chest-high waders over his coat (as shown) so only the upper portion of the coat is exposed. While standing and waiting, the hunter must carry his shotgun and his hands are
20 exposed to the elements. Normal pockets would not be accessible for warming his hands, and gloves are no solution because the hunter must be able to quickly react, aim and shoot when the opportunity presents itself. Gloves impede hand dexterity. Consequently, the fleece-lined hand-warmer pockets 20 are designed into the jacket to allow the hunter to slip his hands inside while wading, but quickly remove them and grab his gun when necessary. The two hand-warmer
25 pockets 20 are located on either side of the jacket's front zipper, above the outer pockets at breastbone level. The opening to each pocket 20 is angled at approximately 20-30 degrees from

5 vertical, and the inner fleece enclosures continue at an angle so that the hunter can easily slip his hand into the warmer when his arm is bent at the elbow. The hand-warmer pockets at such a height and angle allows the hunter to warm his hands in a comfortable position while wading in cold waist-deep or higher water.

FIG. 7 is a composite view of an exemplary shell pouch 30 as in FIG. 1 (shown full at A, 10 empty and open at B, and partially disassembled at C). Each shell pouch 30 is a roomy pleated pocket sewn to the outer shell of jacket 10, and the spring-biased hinge opener 72 is enclosed in the margin of the pocket for quick releasing and to hold the mouths of the pockets 30 in an open position until pushed shut to prevent spills. The hinge opener 72 is preferably removable from the margin or inseam of the pocket, e.g., releasably enclosed therein (by fold, zipper or the like) 15 for removal, lubrication and/or cleaning of the hinge opener 72.

FIG. 8 is an exploded perspective view of the spring-biased hinge opener 72 as used in FIG. 7. The spring-biased hinge opener 72 is a multi-segmented spring metal collar with four spring segments 78A-D each being formed as a length of spring steel. The four spring segments 78A-D are joined together by six stainless steel joiner sections 79A-E, which may be riveted, 20 welded or otherwise joined end-to-end as shown. Four of the steel joiner sections 79A-E run to opposing hinges 77A & 77B at each end. The segments 78A-D, joiners 79A-E and hinges 77A-B are attached together as shown end-to-end to form a closed collar. While four segments 78A-D and six joiners 79A-E are shown, more or less may be used as a matter of design choice. The spring-biased hinge opener 72 effectively forms a two-position hinge (open or closed), and the 25 fixed length of spring segments 78A-D imposes a self-bias against the hinges 77A & 77B to maintain spring hinge 72 in either an open or closed position, depending on the desire of the

5 hunter. Referring back to FIG. 7, the spring hinge 72 is enclosed within the seams 74 at the mouth-opening of each pouch 30. The completed spring hinge 72 may be removably incorporated into the seam 74 of the mouth-opening of each pouch 40 by forming each mouth-opening with a sleeve adapted to receive the hinge 72, and by incorporating a Velcro® or snap closures 82 around the sleeves 74 to contain the spring hinge 72 therein. As alternatives to snaps 10 82, a zippered closure may be incorporated along the top of sleeve 74 to removably contain the spring hinge 72. This removability feature is important because it allows spring hinges 72 to be replaced if a given hinge 72 rusts or breaks, or simply if the user prefers not to employ them.

In operation, each spring hinge 72 can be snapped open with one hand to make shells immediately accessible, and the pocket 30 will remain in its spring-biased open position so the 15 hunter can easily reach in and grab a shell. Conversely, when the hunter is not in need of the shells, the spring hinge 72 shuts tight to secure the shells, and remains in its spring-biased closed position to prevent them from falling out of the pocket. The hunter easily opens and shuts the pocket 30 by pulling/pushing the outermost hinge outward or by squeezing/pulling the metal hinges on flanking sides of the pocket opening. This process is much simpler than trying to 20 zip/unzip a wetted zipper, and it can be accomplished with the hunter's free hand (the other being occupied with a shotgun).

The above-described jacket provides a warm, waterproof, practical, durable, and rugged 25 hunter's coat specifically designed to be worn while hunting waterfowl, with a specific array of storage features and compartments each being specifically designed for waterfowl-hunting with all of its above-described tribulations. The special placement of each compartment on the jacket facilitates use in waist-deep or higher water, and the types of closures provide quick and easy

5 access as well as secure storage of all necessary waterfowl hunting items, including duck calls, shells, slain waterfowl, etc.

Having now fully set forth the preferred embodiments and certain modifications of the concept underlying the present invention, various other embodiments as well as certain variations and modifications of the embodiments herein shown and described will obviously

10 occur to those skilled in the art upon becoming familiar with said underlying concept. For example, although waterfowl coat 10 of Fig. 1 is described as a waist-length coat, there are other coat lengths and variations such as armless coats or vests. In any case, the coat of the present invention can be provided in other lengths or as a vest, thereby providing the same features as described herein. It is to be understood, therefore, that the invention may be practiced otherwise
15 than as specifically set forth in the appended claims.